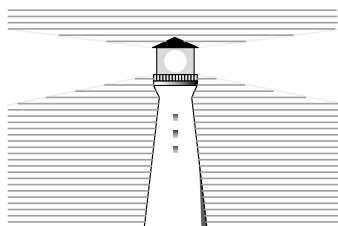


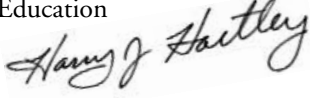
THE FUTURE OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN CONNECTICUT



**COMMITTEE ON THE FUTURE OF
SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN CONNECTICUT**

SEPTEMBER 2000

To: The Honorable John G. Rowland, Governor
Leadership of the Connecticut General Assembly and
the Joint Committee on Education
Connecticut State Board of Education
Local and Regional Boards of Education

From: Harry J. Hartley, Chairperson 
Committee on the Future of School Leadership in Connecticut

Date: September 21, 2000

Subject: Final Report

There is mounting evidence that Connecticut, as well as the nation, is facing a steady decline in the number of individuals interested in pursuing a career in educational administration. Such a decline could affect the future quality of Connecticut's school leadership and, ultimately, student achievement. In September 1999, the State Board of Education approved a set of general recommendations on this issue and proposed a state-level committee to develop more specific solutions.

This report responds to the charge of Commissioner of Education Theodore S. Sergi, who asked a group of Connecticut educators this summer "to develop a concise analysis and long-range direction for developing, sustaining and improving the future leaders of Connecticut's public elementary and secondary schools."

We have completed this task in the last two months without much fanfare or cost due to the many existing national reports on this topic and the earlier work of the Connecticut State Department of Education. We urge you to consider every aspect of this report and to take action where possible. The recommendations are a blueprint for the next decade. We expect other groups will follow us and recommend even more specific actions on one or more of the directions provided in this report. A new legislative commission is due to begin its work on teacher shortage, minority staff recruitment and administrator shortage within the next week.

I wish to thank all those who participated in defining this first step and to express my hope that as a state we will stay focused on the continuous improvement of Connecticut's public elementary and secondary schools. We will not achieve that goal without enhancing the opportunities for individuals to be successful school leaders.

Thank you.

COMMITTEE ON THE FUTURE OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN CONNECTICUT

School leadership is a more motivating and satisfying career than most others, and the rewards of successful leadership are significant. Few other occupations can provide the opportunity to affect the future quality of life in our society, and touch the lives of so many individuals.

However, leading schools has become enormously demanding and one of the most difficult executive jobs in the United States. School executives are responsible for multimillion dollar public corporations having hundreds of employees and serving thousands of clients. They must deal with significant educational reform, political realities, economic constraints, an increasingly litigious environment, and turbulent social pressures. Public school leaders face intense demands for accountability for success. Meeting these conflicting demands requires many interactions with all those who have some interest in schools: other local and state officials, unions, other administrators, teachers, professional and classified staff members, students, parents and, of course, citizens. These interactions produce internal and external conflicts that require significant abilities to manage and lead. In these conditions the leader often feels isolated, with little sense of autonomy and support. This environment has led to new and complex demands that bear on the attractiveness of administrative careers.

Successful school leadership in the future will operate in an even more rapidly changing environment and, therefore, will require more flexibility. The nature of leadership itself is changing. The model of the single leader is declining in favor of multiple leaders serving different purposes and performing different functions. Therefore, leadership needs to be built on shared authority and responsibility. In the broad sense, this means investing in others and increasing opportunities for individual authority, responsibility, choice and influence. Such leadership can release organizational potential, make decisions and actions count, and increase the sense that individuals can make a difference. It is distributing authority, encouraging initiative, creating a culture of cooperation, cultivating connections, building capacity, and developing a professional problem-solving capacity that will increasingly describe successful leadership. To achieve this type of leadership, the school administrator must lead and assist in shaping a new vision and culture in our schools.

The decline in the number of applicants for administrative positions is well documented in a number of national, state and local reports. For example, according to the Connecticut State Department of Education, September 2000:

Connecticut is facing a steady decline in the number of individuals interested in pursuing a career in educational administration. Such a decline could potentially impact the quality of its new school leaders. Although approximately 5,800 educators hold the appropriate Connecticut certification for school administrative positions and approximately 2,300 are working as administrators, the number of applicants for principal has continually declined since 1990. The median number of applications received by districts for vacant school principal positions in 1990 was 60; the median reported for 2000 was only half that, or about 30. This decline in the number of applicants is even more interesting, given the increase in the number of Connecticut teachers obtaining administrative certification. In 1999-2000, 883 teachers were newly certified in administration.

The literature and the data seem to indicate that the problem is not an inadequate number of persons certified, but that large numbers of qualified candidates are not attracted to administrative positions.

Among the more common issues contributing to the shortage of candidates and high administrative turnover are insufficient authority compared to responsibility, inadequate compensation for the scope and complexity of the job, and a lack of public understanding of the role of and escalating demands on educational administrators.

There is no single solution to this problem. The purpose of this report is to recommend ways to recruit and retain highly qualified individuals in careers in school administration.

A. JOB DESIGN AND COMPENSATION

The design of the job can inhibit or encourage effectiveness. There are a number of aspects of current school administrative positions that should be addressed to enhance the attractiveness of and the probability of success in these assignments.

We recommend:

A.1 ROLE CLARITY

To improve the individual and collective leadership of our schools, each local board of education should articulate its unique role — as well as that of each administrator, and the relationships among them. The Committee believes that school boards should be making policy: adopting a budget, hiring the superintendent, and establishing goals and monitoring success. That the superintendent is the chief executive officer of the school district in matters of personnel, finance, day-to-day operations, and educational affairs. That the school principal should be given authority, flexibility and support in leading his or her school. And that entry-level administrative positions should include a broad range and balance of duties.

A.2 COMPENSATION

The General Assembly should commission an independent analysis of the issues of responsibility and compensation and the projected administrator and teacher shortage 2000-2010. In addition, each local school district should conduct an analysis of the unique responsibilities and requirements of school administrative positions in its district, with special attention to the scope of responsibility, time expectations and compensation. The analysis should include a comparison between administrative salaries and the teacher salary schedule. A multiyear plan should be implemented to eliminate inequities where they exist.

A.3 RETIREMENT

The General Assembly, in consultation with the Teachers Retirement Board, should commission an additional analysis of the current retirement system to eliminate the significant current disincentives to working in Connecticut, provide for the purchase of out-of-state work and pension conversion, provide for hiring retired administrators (and teachers) without penalty, and provide for earlier vesting.

A.4 ADMINISTRATIVE MODELS

The state should provide incentive grants to school districts to design and implement new models of administration (e.g., separation of management functions and instructional leadership functions, distributed leadership, regional job sharing of leaders with special expertise). Furthermore, every school district should study the separation of management and instruction, exploring the idea of using others to handle school and district management functions unrelated to teaching and learning.

B. RECRUITMENT, TRAINING AND RETENTION

Adequate preparation is a continuum that includes recruitment, training, induction and professional experience. At present, recruitment to administrative careers largely is unsystematic and based on self-selection. Candidates for administrative preparation do not reflect the diversity of Connecticut society. Increased attention, resources and flexibility are a major part of the solution to this problem.

We recommend:

B.1 ASPIRANT PROGRAMS

Each school district or collective of school districts through collaboration involving regional educational service centers and higher education should develop and maintain succession planning to identify candidates exhibiting characteristics of effective leaders and offer a well-designed administrative aspirant program. This program must promote the interest of teachers in becoming educational administrators and administrators in becoming superintendents through a planned series of experiences that focus on successful schools and leaders. Job shadowing opportunities and internships should be included. These activities should be supported with state financial incentives for aspirant and administrator preparation programs.

B.2 ADMINISTRATOR INDUCTION

The Connecticut State Department of Education, with assistance from others, should develop a comprehensive beginning administrator induction program that provides for a network of support, mentors and statewide seminars. All such programs should be implemented at the local or regional level with financial stipends provided by the state to support mentors and training.

B.3 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Connecticut State Department of Education, with assistance from others, should create professional development programs for practicing administrators that are designed to provide job-specific support and assistance, place more emphasis on workplace learning and incorporate training assistance from the private sector. A statewide program of administrator exchange and minisabbaticals should be included.

B.4 MINORITY RECRUITMENT

The General Assembly should pay significant attention to recruiting and retaining members of minority groups, through school collaborations involving districts, higher education and regional educational service centers, supported by state-financed incentives.

B.5 ADMINISTRATOR PREPARATION

The Connecticut State Department of Education should implement state regulations relating to administrator preparation course content, student competencies and the required internship sooner (moving up the date from July 1, 2003, to January 1, 2002). Further, the Department and institutions of higher education should require the use of the Connecticut Administrator Test as part of the preparation program and the program approval process, but not as a certification requirement at this time. They also should provide for equivalency standards for out-of-state applicants.

B.6 ALTERNATE ROUTES

The Connecticut State Department of Education and institutions of higher education should create different routes to administrator certification and reduce the "successful teaching experience" requirement for administrative certification from five years to four on an exception basis.

Implementing the recommendations above will not eliminate all the barriers to recruiting and retaining high-quality school leaders, but should result in more individuals willing to assume leadership positions in education.

These recommendations are addressed to the State Board of Education, every local board of education, the General Assembly and Governor, and other state and local officials and interested parties. We urge each group and leader to take action where and when they can – without waiting for others to act. Strong steps motivated by a sense of urgency will allow Connecticut to continue its long tradition of high-quality leadership throughout the state's public schools.

The economic and social future of Connecticut depends on excellent schools, excellent teachers and excellent school leadership. Anything that interferes with achieving these results must be addressed cooperatively by all members of the educational and governmental communities. Making educational leadership more attractive to more high-quality candidates is one fundamental step in the process of achieving these goals.

9/21/00

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